

# TSP Express

*A report for Technical Service Providers*  
**September 2007** **Report No. 10**

## **TSP Current Developments** **Angel Figueroa, TSP Team Leader**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is committed to making the Technical Service Provider (TSP) process prescribed by Congress a successful endeavor. In an effort to continually improve this process, we are responding to suggestions received through letters, emails, and personal contacts from TSPs around the nation.

First, the TSPs recommended changing the name of the TSP payments from “Not-to Exceed Rates”, since this was perceived as being the maximum rate a TSP may charge his/her client. In response, we are in the process of changing the name to “TSP Payment Rates” in hopes that the new name will not be perceived as the maximum rate a TSP may charge. Clients are responsible for the difference between their government reimbursement and the actual TSP charge and NRCS does not intervene in the client’s contract with the TSP.

In response to a second recommendation, we have re-designed the TechReg website to improve navigation and make it more user-friendly. The new website will be ready for deployment very soon and should enhance the certification process. However, the basic rules of certification have not changed.

Thirdly, TSPs have expressed a desire to work with electronic client files. In order to grant access to the electronic client files NRCS had to address the security issue of protecting our clients’ private information. NRCS and partners are developing a “Conservation Plug-in”, which is an application that will allow TSPs, with

authorization from clients, to work on electronic files outside of the secure computing environment of the agency. This feature will be tested for a few months with a goal of deploying it 2008.

I encourage you to contact your State TSP Coordinator or my office with any questions or suggestions that will make this process better for all involved. I also wish to thank you for the work that you do in order to help our clients implement their natural resources conservation objectives.

### **Partnership Extends Technical Assistance**

**By: Robert Hotchkiss, NRCS/NWTF Liaison**

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) is partnering with the NRCS in Georgia to plan and implement wildlife habitat improvement for private landowners through a TSP Cooperative Agreement. This agreement was developed to accelerate planning and implementation for private landowners and managers for fish and wildlife resources.

Since August 2006 James Austin, Regional NWTF Biologist for Georgia, has been providing technical assistance to landowners, in south central Georgia to implement and certify wildlife practices. Additionally, James has been educating the public regarding NRCS programs and general wildlife management techniques by participating in field days and workshops with other forestry and wildlife partners.

The NWTF has a specially designed program to provide informative, on-sight workshops for private landowners and resource managers called "Wild Turkey Woodland Field Days". Each field day is designed to educate landowners and resource professionals by covering such topics as: woodlot management for wildlife and timber, native warm season grass establishment and management, federal cost-share programs for landowners, timber measurement – volume and value, forest openings for wildlife, wetland restoration and enhancement, riparian buffers and streamside corridor improvement options, and reclaiming abandoned orchards and grassy opening. James has assisted in holding 14 partnership field days/workshops in 11 counties across Georgia.



Recently, Greg Boozer, an NWTF headquarters biologist from Edgefield, South Carolina was assigned to the project to assist with a heavy workload signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP - CP-36), which is a special longleaf pine and native under story restoration effort in southern and central Georgia. Greg will also assist NRCS field offices in the Broad River Conservation District to plan and implement practices for wildlife and forestry.

The successes of this cooperative agreement and others like it create great potential to use the expertise and resources of fish and wildlife agencies and organizations like the NWTF to enhance the quality of technical assistance that NRCS provides to private landowners and managers.



Helping People Help the Land...

## **FIELD FOCUS – Wyoming**

### **Technical Service Providers Play a Key Role in Wetland Enhancement Projects**

By Keith Culver, NRCS District Conservationist, Newcastle, Wyoming & Christina Schmidt, District Coordinator, Weston County Natural Resource District, Newcastle, Wyoming

“The TSP program has been just what we needed,” said Keith Culver, District Conservationist in Newcastle, Wyoming, about the engineering assistance provided by Technical Service Providers (TSP) in his area. “This assistance has been beneficial for both the NRCS and landowners in Weston County, Wyoming and has resulted in several new water projects that benefit local wildlife.”

Weston County lies on the southwest edge of the Black Hills and has been identified as an important area for enhancing waterfowl habitat. Culver noted that wetland habitat in this area has proven to be very productive for waterfowl but that a shortage of NRCS engineering assistance was preventing many good habitat improvement projects from being completed.

In 2003, the Weston County Natural Resource District began contracting with Jack Doyle and Duane Klamn, both retired NRCS engineers, to provide designs and construction layouts on eight ponds and wetland enhancement projects in the area.



Since that time, additional landowners have been using TSP funds available through NRCS to contract with these engineers to provide design, layout, construction oversight and final checkout on many additional projects, bringing the number of projects in the county to nearly twenty-five.

According to Culver, this assistance from TSP engineers has helped fill a critical need.

“We have a good working relationship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited,” he said. “Their assistance, combined with available Farm Bill programs allows us to give landowners the necessary financial incentive to complete these projects. The only thing missing was engineering assistance, and the technical assistance program helped to provide that. I look forward to working with them on more projects in the future”.

## **FIELD FOCUS – Nebraska**

### **Nebraska Maximizes Technical Service Provider Technical Assistance**

By Steve Chick, State Conservationist, Lincoln, Nebraska

Nebraska currently has 132 individuals enrolled through the TechReg site as Technical Service Providers. In addition to TechReg Nebraska also employs outside technical help via competed task orders and agreements. This year Nebraska will likely obligate just over \$2.1 million in outside technical help, which is actually down from about \$2.9 million each of the two previous years. Overall shrinking technical assistance funding is the reason Nebraska for the decrease in outside vendor assistance, however non-NRCS technical assistance remains critical for the agency in Nebraska to meet workload demands.

Through TSP technical assistance a CNMP for a 3,000 head operation of beef feeders was completed for Orville Hoffschneider & Sons Inc. The Hoffschneiders are the fifth and sixth generation to be raising beef on this farm. The work was accomplished by joint efforts of TSPs. Settje Engineering provided the design and inspection,

Greckel Construction provided the earthwork, and a company out of Wisconsin completed the installation of the liner. The holding pond is approx. ¼ mile southeast of the settling basin, so the liquid is transferred by a pump and pipeline.



Photo #1



Photo #2

Photo #1 - CET Mark Hoferer and District Conservationist Bryan Euse are standing on the embankment of this membrane lined holding pond. The cattle lots are in the far background, so an underground pipeline carries the liquid from the settling basin at the base of the lots under a road into the pond.

Photo #2 - Mike, Chad and Maurice Hoffschneider are pictured above. They own and operate the cattle operation. They are very pleased with the EQIP assistance offered by NRCS. In fact, Maurice said if not for the EQIP cost share assistance they would have been forced to shut down the cattle operation.

These stories and pictures provide a glimpse of the diversity of work and the partnerships that are combining together to maximize the use of our USDA conservation programs for the benefit of landowners and our natural resources in Nebraska. We can honestly say in Nebraska that we are maximizing the use of the USDA conservation programs, while leveraging effectively with many other state and local programs and partners for the betterment of our state's natural resources.



## FIELD FOCUS – Hawaii

### Technical Service Providers, Partners, and NRCS Unite to Protect Endangered Waterbirds

By: Dr. Greg Koob, State Biologist, Pacific Islands Area

The Hawaiian Islands are the most isolated chain of islands in the world. This isolation poses unique challenges to the economy and environmental health of the State. The Safe Harbor Program is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Hawaii's Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). A Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) can be set up to assure private landowners that their beneficial stewardship activities do not result in future restrictions under the Endangered Species Act.

A proposal was submitted for the Natural Resources Conservation Service to partner with the University of Hawaii (UH) to streamline the process, allowing landowners who do endangered waterbird habitat improvements under any Farm Bill Program to receive a SHA permit, held by four Resource Conservation and Development Councils in Hawaii (RC&Ds). The purpose of this project was to develop a Programmatic SHA for five endangered Hawaiian waterbirds (Hawaiian Goose, Hawaiian Duck, Hawaiian Coot, Hawaiian Moorhen, and Hawaiian Stilt).



Hawaiian Goose or Nēnē



Hawaiian Stilt or A'eō



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Hawaiian Coot or `Alae ke`oke`o



Hawaiian Moorhen or `Alae `ula

TSP Kim Uyehara spent two years developing and negotiating the statewide, seven-party, programmatic SHA. She worked with landowners and agencies to draft the SHA, spent innumerable hours addressing agency comments, helped the RC&Ds acquire funds for implementation, and developed two biology technical notes on Hawaiian Goose and Hawaiian Hawk. Future products include SHA training materials, baseline determinations, and ongoing technical assistance. She will also work with the RC&Ds to develop outreach brochures, presentations, and an interactive website for the future SHA.



Photo #1



Photo #2

Photo #1 - TSP Kim Uyehara (far right) conducts a site visit for the Endangered Species Recovery Committee at Kawaihau Wetlands Reserve Program site on Kaua'i. Other participants (from left to right) include Thomas Ka`iakapu of DLNR, Adonia Henry of Ducks Unlimited, Rhoda Libre of Garden Island RC&D, Terrell Erickson and Lex Riggle of NRCS, and Cliff Morden of UH (October 13, 2005)

Photo #2 - TSP Kim Uyehara (front right) joins Chris Jasper of NRCS (left) and Ranae Ganske-Cerizo of NRCS (rear) at a soil pit during a wetland delineation at the Lua Kealialalo Wetlands Reserve Program on Kaho`olawe (July 19, 2007).



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## For More Information

For more information on Technical Service Providers, visit the TechReg site at <http://techreg.usda.gov>; write to Angel Figueroa, National Technical Service Provider Team Leader, Science and Technology Deputy Area, USDA-NRCS, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890; phone: 202-720-6731, or e-mail at [Angel.Figueroa@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Angel.Figueroa@wdc.usda.gov).

*State Technical Service Provider Contacts*  
<http://techreg.usda.gov/RptStateContact4Admin.aspx>

## Your Feedback is Needed

This is the tenth issue of TSP Express, a report for technical services providers. We are seeking topics for future issues. Please send comments to [tsp@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:tsp@wdc.usda.gov).

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